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ABSTRACT

Although the study of educational leadership has gained in prominence in the last 2 decades, leadership as a concept remains as elusive as ever, prompting some authors to argue that the search for a general theory of leadership is futile. This paper argues that further conceptual and empirical work on educational leadership is useful in avoiding frequently occurring misconceptions, and in understanding the possibilities and constraints for leadership in school operations and change. "Leadership" is defined here in relation to management and headship and should be understood as a complex interplay of personal, organizational, and broader social contexts rather than as attributes of persons or positions. Variants of leadership theory discussed include the "great man" or trait theory, the contingency and situational approach, and transformational leadership theory. Positive and negative aspects of educational leadership are illustrated in South African case studies where different schools show organizational resiliency or dysfunction. Current challenges for educational management and leadership are also discussed. If schools are to meet the goals of providing high-quality teaching and learning for all students in the most equitable way possible, educational leaders and theorists of leadership need to work creatively with complexity. (Contains 92 references.) (RT)

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CAPTURING COMPLEXITY IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Capturing Complexity in Educational Leadership

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Introduction

The study of educational leadership has gained in prominence in the last two decades. School effectiveness studies in the 1980s and 1990s without exception have listed leadership as one of the features of effective schools; and school reform research and interventions in developed as well as developing countries have generally targeted leadership as a point of leverage for change. Yet despite this, leadership as a concept remains as elusive as ever, prompting the authors of the *International Handbook for Educational Leadership and Administration* (1996) to argue that the search for a general theory of leadership is futile. While agreeing with their view, this paper takes the position that further conceptual and empirical work on educational leadership is useful in avoiding frequently recurring misconceptions, and in understanding the possibilities and constraints for leadership in school operation and change. The paper argues that leadership should be 'de-romanticised', and understood in terms of social relations rather than attributes of persons or positions. It proposes a three-part framework, whereby educational leadership is understood as a complex interplay of the personal, the organisational and the broader social context. From this position, it argues that school leadership in the context of 'new times' (Hall and Jacques; 1989; Hall, 1989) needs to be stretched across tasks and people, rather than only being the preserve of designated individuals. The paper begins by clarifying concepts around leadership; it then sets out its three-part framework and illustrates the framework by case study of post-apartheid schools in South Africa; and finally shows how the framework might be put into play in the current context of schooling.

Clarifying concepts and theories of leadership

When considering school leadership as a concept, it is useful to begin by clarifying its meaning in relation to two associated concepts, management and headship. While this paper will argue that the three concepts should be interrelated in the context of schools, it is useful to start by drawing out conceptual differences. Though different definitions of leadership abound, one of the central points that they agree upon is that leadership involves the exercise of influence over others, and thus, unlike management, can take place outside, as well as inside of formal organisations. Within organisations, leadership can be exercised at most levels and in most activities. That being so, it is important to recognise that leadership in schools is not the preserve of any position, and thus can be found and built throughout the school. Management, in contrast to leadership, relates to structures and processes by which organisations meet their goals and central purposes, and arguably, is more likely to be tied to formal positions than to persons. Headship, like management, is a structural position, which carries with it responsibilities and accountabilities. Whereas the authority of a leader is accorded by followers, the authority of a head is accorded by organisational position, though it may be accorded by followers as well. Whereas leaders operate through influence, heads may operate through compulsion, as well as consent and influence. Whereas leaders may influence followers to take any direction, managers and heads are bound by goals and primary tasks of the organisation, and their success or failure is judged in terms of these. Whereas leaders have responsibility towards followers only, managers and heads have responsibilities for meeting organisational and systemic goals. It is heads who are

also usually responsible for symbolic roles such as ceremonies, assemblies and so on.

Having distinguished between these three concepts, we would argue that ideally, the three should come together in schools, so that heads are both leaders and managers. Heads (as well as deputies and heads of departments) hold formal positions of authority, and are responsible and accountable for the activities of the schools. Ideally, in achieving the alignment of leading and managing, heads should lead by exercising influence rather than by compulsion; and a key task for them is to recognise leadership throughout the school, and to influence it towards achieving the broader goals of the school. As the paper will argue, it is possible to lead from the centre rather than the top (Louis, Kruse and Marks,1996), and to stretch and disperse leadership across people and functions. In relation to management, heads are responsible for setting, maintaining and changing the structures, strategies and processes by which the school operates; in a sense they are responsible for ensuring the organised rhythm of the school.

There is continuing debate about whether leadership and management are the same or different, and whether or not they should be split conceptually. In this debate, Krantz and Gilmore (1990) argue convincingly that revitalising organisations requires the integration of their substantive with their operative concerns in achieving their missions, and thus that leadership and management should be integrated. Picking up on this debate in the context of schools, Chapman (1993) asks and answers the question as follows:

> ...in the context of a changing political, social, economic, and technical environment, in which there is increasing emphasis on school effectiveness, but in which altered patterns of educational governance have brought about changes in the decisions to be taken at different levels in the school system, what is required of those people now responsible for educational leadership at the school site?
>
> In answering this question I wish to support the view that visionary and creative leadership and effective management in education require a deliberate and conscious attempt at integration, enmeshment and coherence: the enmeshment of the qualitative and quantitative concerns of schooling, the linking together of substance and process, an external and an internal view, a strategic and an operational perspective simultaneously. This 'integrative' or 'coherentist' approach to educational leadership mirrors approaches proposed in the broader field of public administration and business by theorists such as Gilmore and Krantz. (Chapman, 1993, p. 14)

Turning to the meandering field of leadership studies, there are a number of well-trodden paths, of which this paper considers three. Perhaps the most enduring of leadership theories are variants on 'great man' or trait theories, which regard leadership as attributes of the person. While it is conceptually and empirically straightforward to point to flaws in trait theories, these theories continue to resurface in different forms. It is easy to show that the traits associated with 'great man' theories of leadership tend to reflect idealised, masculinist, heroic myths, rather than the realities of what ordinary leadership is like in most organisations, including schools. It is easy to point out that these are romantic pictures that present universal features of leaders as saviours whose qualities stand outside of time and place. Yet 'gurus' who peddle do-it-yourself wisdom and 'mavericks' who break rules to achieve exceptional results continue to surface as favourite leadership stereotypes. Why is it that these attribution theories are so enduring in spite of their lack of realism? We

would argue that one reason why they persist is because they do contain a certain truth, and that is that the person of the leader does make a difference. It is not hard to think of instances or personal experiences where the change of a leader turns a situation from good to bad, or bad to good. Individuals with their particular biographies, capacities, and dispositions or habituses as Bourdieu (1997) would describe it1, have a legitimate part in theories of leadership. Consideration of individual leadership is necessary, but it is not sufficient in explaining the social relations of leadership.

Leadership is embedded in various fields of social relations; think, for example, of principals located at the intersection of multiple fields, professional, both inside and outside the school, local community, systemic relations, and so on. Fullan (2000) attempts to capture this idea of the school leader through his talk of the three stories of educational reform, namely, 'the inside', 'the outside–in' and 'the inside-out' narratives which 'story' the work of school leaders. Gewirtz and her colleagues (1995, p.96) speak of 'bilingual headteachers' in the English context to pick up on the positioning of them at the point of intersection of managerial and professional discourses. Stephen Ball (1999) has spoken of how a number of competing discourses 'swarm and seethe' around the teacher in the context of school and system reform. Applying that idea to school leadership in a state of reform, and given the notion of principals located at the point of intersection of multiple fields, it might thus be best to think of contemporary school leaders as having to be 'multilingual' rather than simply bi-lingual.

A second favourite path evident in leadership studies is what may be loosely grouped together as contingency and situational theories, which shift the focus from individual attributes to behaviours and settings. This broad position is well summed up in the words of one of its best-known theorists, Fiedler (1967):

> Any one style of leadership is not in itself better than any other, nor is one type of leadership behaviour appropriate for all conditions. Hence, almost anyone should be able to succeed as a leader in some situations and almost everyone is likely to fail in others.... It also follows from this theory that one can improve group or organizational performance either by changing the leader to fit the situation or changing the situation to fit the leader. (1967, p. 246)

Contingency and situational approaches are an important move beyond trait theories in that they view leadership as involving a repertoire of styles and behaviours (at least some of which may be learnt), and, significantly, they bring consideration of context into prominence. A danger in contingency and situational approaches is that they may emphasise technique over substance, and result in manipulative behaviour. In their extreme, they may be more Machiavellian than moral. It is in relation to these theories that the comment is made that it is more important 'to do the right things than to do things right'. Although specific contingency and situational theories are

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1 In *Pascalian Meditations* (2000, p.138), Bourdieu provides a useful definition of habitus. He does so in commenting on his rejection of both structural determinism and individual volition as alternative explanations for individual practices. He states: 'As against both of these theories, it has to be posited that social agents are endowed with habitus, inscribed in their bodies by past experiences. These systems of schemes of perception, appreciation and action enable them to perform acts of practical knowledge, based on the identification and recognition of conditional, conventional stimuli to which they are predisposed to react; and without any explicit definition of ends or rational calculation of means, to generate appropriate and endlessly renewed staregies, but within the limits of the structural constraints of which they are the product and which define them'.

often too complex to be useful in practice (Yukl, 1998), it remains the case that most contemporary theories of leadership are contingency theories of some sort (Buchanan and Hucyznski, 1997).

Why have these theories of leadership proved so resilient? One reason is because they, too, contain a certain truth about leadership: the importance of context and context-appropriate activity. Just as individuals with particular biographies, capacities and habitus are an important component of any theory of leadership, so, too, are the particular organisations or social fields in which individual habituses are located, as well as the broader social, political and economic context in which these fields or organisations operate. It makes little sense to evaluate the leadership of a school principal without considering the central purposes of schools as organisations responsible for providing systematic learning and teaching, and the broader social configuration of the times, in which education policies are drawn up and implemented.

There is a third theory of leadership which emerged in the 1980s and has become a favourite, 'well-trodden path' in studies of educational leadership, namely transformational leadership. In a sense, the idea of transformational leadership was a response to the rapidity of change surrounding any organisation today. Interest in transformational leadership may be understood as part of a broader set of concerns about the emotional and symbolic aspects of leadership influences, which emerged in leadership theories during the 1980s. Of particular interest was the question of how leaders influenced followers to sacrifice their own self-interests in favour of the interests of the organisation. The seminal work in this area was that of James McGregor Burns (1978), who drew the distinction between transactional and transformational leadership. Burns viewed power as central to leadership relationships, saying that 'the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and followers' values and motivations' (1978, p 20). Transactional leadership is based on an exchange of valued things, which bind leaders and followers together. Transformational leadership goes further than this. In Burns's words, it occurs

> ...when one or more persons *engage* with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.... Various names are used for such leadership: elevating, mobilizing, inspiring, exalting, uplifting, preaching, exhorting, evangelizing. The relationship can be moralistic, of course. But transforming leadership ultimately becomes *moral* in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both....Transcending leadership is dynamic leadership in the sense that the leaders throw themselves into a relationship with followers who will feel 'elevated' by it and often become more active themselves, thereby creating new cadres of leaders. (original emphasis, *ibid*).

The notion of transformational leadership has had a considerable impact on studies of educational leadership (see Gronn, 1996; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). In a range of empirical studies, Leithwood and colleagues have developed, tested and refined an eight dimensional model of transformational leadership for schools. In this model, transformational leadership is characterised as leading to 'higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals', which is 'assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity' (1999, p. 9). The eight dimensions of transformational leadership outlined by the authors are: 'building school vision; establishing school goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modeling best

practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions' (*ibid.*). This is a comprehensive list indeed.

One reason why transformational leadership has been taken up with enthusiasm by educational leadership theorists is that there is an affinity between education as a normative practice, and those theories which emphasise moral principles and active commitment to visions. However, it needs to be noted that Burns's study of leadership draws on the individual lives of 'great men' (and says little, if anything, about the effects of race and gender on leadership or followership). Burns is clear that morality and values are integral to leadership, arguing that transactional leadership is driven by 'values of means' such as honesty, responsibility, fairness, and honouring of commitment, while transformational leadership is concerned with 'end-values': liberty, justice, equality. However, it is important to recognise that the substantive meanings of values are not always the same in every instance. Burns himself makes an interesting observation in relation to Hitler (whom he considers to be a despot not a leader because he used power through coercion rather than influence):

> Both Roosevelt and Hitler made the symbol "freedom" the great object for which their nations fought during World War II; it was conflict over the *substance* of freedom that radically separated the two men and their ideologies. (1978, pp. 430-431)

Thus there are no guarantees that the values driving transformational leadership in education are necessarily based substantively on human rights, equality, democracy and social justice—or indeed that these values have standard interpretations. Certainly Leithwood *et al* (1999) and Gronn (1996), in discussing transformational leadership, do not seriously consider gender issues, which is a striking illustration that 'transformation' may have its limits. Indeed, Jill Blackmore's (1999) *Troubling Women* provides a very instructive feminist account of the gendered effects of educational restructuring upon leadership in schools in the state of Victoria, Australia, also Gronn's home state, where female leaders are asked to do much of the emotional work associated with a system undergoing rapid change. The greedy organisations (Coser, 1974; Blackmore, 1999) of the neo-liberal era demand much emotional labour of those involved in schooling with a particular impact upon women. Moreover, in spite of Burns's enthusiasm, morality is concerned with both good and bad, and despite its usually positive connotations, leadership is as well. As Kets de Vries, (1993) and Clements and Washbush (1999) point out, there is a 'dark side' to leadership, which may operate negatively as well as positively, and there is a complexity of both conscious and unconscious forces at work within organisations. To focus exclusively on positive aspects of leadership and organisation is to limit understanding of their complexity, particularly in terms of their social relations. In the words of Clements and Washbush:

> It is clear that effective leadership can be instrumental in promoting social good, but what should be equally clear is that effective leadership can also be instrumental in promoting social disaster. The positive face dominates leadership theory, discussion and education, but as Palmer has noted (1994) this feeds a costly delusion. We need to identify and deal with the shadow aspects of leadership, especially in leadership education and training ....
>
> There are many effects of this failure: bad decision making, frustration, dysfunctional organizations, unintended consequences, wasted resources,

> ruined careers, organizational decline or dissolution, and scores of other negatives. (1999, p. 2)

Taking this point further, we would argue that the 'management of meaning' so often listed as a leadership task (see, eg, Bennis, 1991), also needs to be considered in its negative instantiation, as does the notion that leaders and managers should shape organisational culture. Read differently, these practices may come close to indoctrination and manipulation by those in power. Whereas it may be possible to argue that indoctrination and manipulation are not strictly speaking elements of 'leadership', it could be counter-argued that the conceptual boundaries of activities as complex as leadership cannot so easily be drawn in practice. While theories of transformational leadership add the important dimensions of vision and vision-building to leadership studies, it is also necessary to 'deromanticise' these concepts.

In short, leadership is not a simple concept, and education theorists would be wise to work with a more complex concept of leadership, which allows for the interplay of different forces and fields. The position proposed here is that leadership involves the complex interplay of the personal/ biographical, the institutional/ organisational, and the broader social, political and economic context. The work of Bourdieu (1997, 2000) is useful here to think of the interplay between the practices of a school leader with a particular habitus working across a number of fields with different power structures, hierarchies of influence, and logics of practice. Thus, educational leadership involves storied individuals, within the organisational contexts of schools as institutions for systematic teaching and learning, at particular times and places, while also recognising that there are multiple and contingent factors which come together in the creation of educational systems and schools. Schools and educational systems are in a sense archives in which are played out the residual, dominant and emergent elements of culture (Williams, 1980) and these work their ways out in different ways in the multiple fields which structure the work of school leaders. And while there is a way in which schools are the expression of an international cultural form (Meyer, Boli, Thomas and Ramirez, 1997; Meyer, Ramirez and Soysal, 1992), there is also what Pat Thomson (1999) has called the 'thisness' of any school, in an attempt to pick up on the idiosyncrasies of the specific school. Within this approach, leadership is a dynamic process where conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational forces play out in complex social situations, which produce results that may or may not be moral or transformational. This position will be illustrated with reference to a particular set of circumstances in South African schooling, namely the breakdown of teaching and learning in black township schools during and after apartheid.

Complexities in school management and leadership

During the last two decades of apartheid in South Africa, a large number of black schools ceased to function, particularly secondary schools in urban townships. The 1976 Soweto schools uprising began a period of almost continuous opposition and resistance to 'Bantu Education'. This tradition of protest against inferior education, combined with the poverty, material deprivation and disruption of township communities, left a legacy of school breakdown that the post-apartheid government has struggled to turn around. Characteristic features of these schools include irregular attendance by both staff and students; conflictual relationships within schools between principals, teachers and students; discontinuous learning and poor results; and violence, criminality, rape and substance abuse within and around schools. Yet, in the same difficult circumstances, a number of schools managed to survive, albeit precariously in some cases.

A major research initiative on the dysfunctional schools in one of South Africa's provinces identified four sets of problems in these schools (Christie, 1998; de Clercq, Morgan and Christie, 1995; Chisholm and Vally, 1996). Firstly, poor physical and social facilities in many cases impacted negatively on teaching and learning. Secondly, there were serious organisational problems, including weak and unaccountable leadership, administrative dysfunction (for example difficulties in drawing up timetables), poor communication, and inadequate disciplinary and grievance procedures. Added to this were two other problems: poor relationships with surrounding communities, and poor communications and interactions with education departments. What was striking to the research team, of which Christie was a member, was the extent to which schools had habituated to their breakdown, and the lack of a sense of responsibility among principals, teachers and students in these schools (de Clercq, Morgan and Christie, 1995).

Though large numbers of schools struggled unsuccessfully with these problems, others managed to continue to function in the same adverse circumstances that overwhelmed nearby schools. The researchers called these 'resilient schools', following Wang and Iglesias's (1996) work on inner city schools in the USA. The term was used metaphorically rather than analytically, and captured by the words of Vaillant, 'Resilience conveys both the capacity to be bent without breaking, and the capacity, once bent, to spring back' (1993, p. 284).

Research into these schools identified a number of interlocking features (Christie, 2001; Christie and Potterton with others, 1997). These included: having a sense of agency and responsibility, so that the schools felt able to tackle at least some of their problems; flexible and purposive leadership; a focus on learning and teaching as the central activities of the school; a safe and organisationally functioning institutional environment; consistent disciplinary practices anchored in educational purposes and personal interaction; and a culture of concern within the school. Though the researchers had anticipated that school governance and parental involvement would feature as sources of resilience, they found instead that most schools struggled to establish functioning governing bodies, and there was little parental involvement in governance, though parents were indeed involved in schools in other ways. Resilient schools tended to have functioning, though not always close, relationships with their surrounding communities and often drew support from external sources close to the school: a church, non-governmental organisation, or tribal authority. Almost to a school, they did not rely on support from the government or local education departments - possibly because government departments were in a state of restructuring and transition at that time. In short, resilient schools showed features of inner cohesion, with schools drawing more from relationships close to their boundaries than from more distant sources, including education departments.

Though the two sets of research did not focus on leadership and management but on school functioning more broadly, both identified leadership and management as contributing towards school breakdown on the one hand, and to the inner cohesion of school resilience on the other. While drawing out one dimension of these studies for fuller consideration in isolation from the others needs to be done with caution, there are points of insight to be gleaned about leadership and management, which warrant further consideration.

First, the dysfunctional schools provide a stark picture of organisational failure. In key operational areas, these schools lacked formal systems and procedures. Timetabling was often haphazard; whole school days were cancelled for sporting or choir activities; and students and teachers were often not in class. Record-keeping, including class registers, was not systematic, and there were no procedures for

appropriate accountability. Often, there were no systems for communication between staff and principals, and meeting procedures were not followed. There were no disciplinary or grievance procedures in place, which was a serious matter given how conflictual relationships in these schools were. Staff and students (and often outsiders) were able to wander on and off the school premises at will during the day; and principals were unable to act against the violence, rape and substance abuse taking place daily within the schools. In strong contrast, all of the resilient schools were organisationally functioning. Importantly, all had operational systems in place for the day-to-day running of the school; all worked along regular routines; and in all cases there were legitimized social relations of authority, accountability and respect. Unlike the dysfunctional schools, which were often very unsafe places, resilient schools were able to provide a demarcated safe and orderly space for teachers and students. In many of the resilient schools, problems of political violence, criminality and substance abuse were, or had been, features of surrounding communities. Yet, in contrast to the dysfunctional schools, resilient schools managed, at least to some degree, to minimise such problems spilling over their boundaries. A culture of concern and support within the school was characteristic of their resilience. This is not to say that these schools were without their problems; many of them struggled to keep going, which suggests the fragility and tenuousness of their situation.

Comparison between the two sets of schools suggests that whereas it may be possible for well-functioning schools to overcome the difficulties posed by their environments, schools which are struggling to operate are more likely to be overwhelmed by these problems. The starkness of organisational failure in the dysfunctional schools shows just how important management structures and procedures are for the operation of schools. In well-functioning schools, they may often be invisible, but without them, teachers and students are unable to do their work.

Secondly, turning to leadership, dysfunctional schools showed plenty of evidence of its 'dark side'. Put bluntly, principals lacked legitimacy and authority, and could not influence the daily operations of the schools. They were unable to build vision or to harness the leadership that existed among students and staff towards the goals of the school, with the effect that students and staff often pulled against principals' authority. The reasons for this lack of legitimacy and authority are complex. In some cases, they related to the actions of the principals themselves. So, for example, in one of the dysfunctional schools in the study, the principal had not attended the school regularly for the past eighteen months, and the school was run by a reluctant deputy. In another school, the principal, who presented himself to the researchers as a dynamic leader, was criticized by staff for his lack of accountability. There were also broader social and political reasons for the tenuous authority of some of the principals. To some degree, principals had been stigmatised by radical student and teacher movements as part of the illegitimate apartheid regime. In the protracted and intense protests which were of revolutionary dimensions, traditional authority relations were inevitably challenged, and in many cases, the rejection of Bantu Education meant the rejection of its authority figures, including school principals. It is also possible that in some cases, the powerlessness of principals could be related to the destructiveness of apartheid more generally, including apartheid education, in which black people were systematically denied democratic rights, and their spheres of personal and social agency were reduced in crucial ways. Apartheid education was characterised by a high degree of centralisation, so that principals had had no budgetary authority or influence over the flow of resources such as textbooks, little or no influence over hiring and firing of staff, and almost no curriculum decision-making powers. In short, they were given few powers to accompany their responsibilities for delivering a non-compulsory and unequal

schooling system. Under these circumstances, the lack of a sense of effectiveness and inability to act is understandable. For whatever reasons, it could be observed that without the sense of power to influence others, these school principals could not be effective leaders.

Yet it needs to be said that some schools and principals were able to retain or develop a power to act for themselves, and were able to establish legitimate relationships of authority and accountability. In all of the resilient schools, principals were leaders. Though their styles and preferred procedures varied widely, all of the principals were able to influence staff and students towards common goals All had a sense of accountability to staff, and developed at least some degree of staff consultation and participation. All spoke of the importance of dialogue and communication with staff, and many saw it as their task to motivate staff and students. All conveyed their commitment to teaching and learning, and to the wellbeing of the school. In some cases, leaders were energetic and dynamic, but this was not always so. Not all were equally forceful individuals, but all were aware of the importance of their own positions and actions as principals in the successful management of their schools. All of the principals could articulate a vision for their schools.

In summary, what the comparison between the two sets of schools shows is that active and accountable leadership plays a key part in the functioning of schools. Research on the dysfunctional schools shows how destructive it can be when those in formal leadership positions do not have legitimacy, and when staff and student leadership pull against principals' leadership. This suggests the importance of principals being able to work together with staff and student leadership to support the central goals of learning and teaching in schools. It goes without saying that for principals to be able to do this, they need to have legitimacy and authority.

Thirdly, a striking point of contrast between the dysfunctional and resilient schools was the importance accorded to teaching and learning. Dysfunctional schools were caught up in patterns of low morale and low academic performance. Principals, teachers and students were demotivated, out of class during school time, and full of blame for each other. Syllabuses were not covered, and failure in the external Year 12 examination was high—with a number of schools achieving no passes at all. In contrast, in all of the resilient schools the day revolved around the rhythms of teaching and learning, teachers and students were in classrooms, the teaching staff was stable, and teachers were motivated through the importance and satisfaction of their work. However, this did not necessarily mean a break with talk-and-chalk and rote learning pedagogies; rather, it meant, in the words of one of the principals, that 'teachers here are trying their best to teach in the classrooms' (Christie and Potterton and others, 1997). The comparison between the purposeful resilient schools and their dysfunctional counterparts suggests that when organisations lose their central purposes, they are vulnerable to collapse.

What compounded the problems of the dysfunctional schools was that the various stakeholders felt powerless to address them. For example, instead of fixing electrical plugs, they waited (in vain) for 'the department' to come. Broken windows, chairs and desks were part of everyday reality. Litter lay about in many of these schools, and there were few attempts to cultivate gardens or playing fields. Facilities such as libraries (however meagre) were often not used. As mentioned earlier, principals, teachers and students appeared to have habituated to their conditions, and blamed each other for their predicament:

> Most of those interviewed [in the study by de Clercq, Morgan and Christie, 1995] mentioned that they were victims of an oppressive system which paralysed them and made them indifferent and dependent. Feeling unfairly treated by the system and unable to perform their tasks, they masked their anxieties, fears and dissatisfaction by blaming others and performing their tasks at a minimum level. They showed no interest or initiative in breaking out of these demoralising patterns. (Christie, 1998, p. 290)

As Christie (1998) has argued in an earlier analysis, these problems go beyond the explanatory power of rational theories of organisation, and perspectives derived from psychoanalytical approaches to organisations are more useful in both understanding and addressing them. In particular, the work of Isabel Menzies Lyth (1989) points to the need for institutions and their members to build social defence systems to cope with anxieties stemming from within themselves and evoked by the institution. In a similar vein, Elliot Jaques asserts in his earlier work,

> ...the existence of hopelessly badly organized managerial institutions ...not only allows for the acting out of ... deeper lying psychotic anxieties, but leaves people with no choice but to do so. (1995, p. 326)

In the case of dysfunctional schools, it could be argued that their substantive work (systematic teaching and learning) was overshadowed by complex group dynamics of the sort outlined by Bion's (1961) classical psychoanalytical study of groups. In Zaleznik's words, the 'real work' of the organisation was subordinated to 'psychopolitics', where managers 'spend their time smoothing over conflict, greasing the wheels of human interaction, and unconsciously avoiding aggression, especially aggression that centres on them and their role' (1989, p. 60). Instead of being able to focus on teaching and learning, these schools were caught up in forms of conflict, aggression and uncertainty that could not be contained within their weak organisational structures. Apathy, depression, lack of a sense of effectiveness, anxiety about physical safety and projection of blame onto others were the results.

Yet, as argued in this paper, the extremely harsh circumstances of poverty and deprivation did not inevitably produce dysfunctional organisations. What the paper has attempted to show through the comparison of these two sets of schools is that leadership is a key ingredient of school functioning, but it is not a simple concept, nor necessarily a positive one.
Rather, it is a dynamic process involving individuals, organisations and broader contexts. Forces that are conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, play out in complex social situations, which produce results that may or may not be moral or transformational. Leadership and management may take many forms, not all of them effective or positive.

Current challenges for educational management and leadership

The final section of this paper addresses a number of challenges for educational management and leadership which are emerging in the 'new times' of globalisation with its attendant economic, cultural, political and social flows (see here, Appadurai, 1996; Burbules and Torres, 2000; Lingard, 2000; Henry, Lingard, Rizvi and Taylor, 2001, Ch 2) and resultant homogenisation and differentiation (Hall and Jacques, 1989). There is a growing literature which explores broad trends in school reform in English-speaking schooling systems (see, eg, Fullan, 2000; Halsey *et al*, 1997; Leithwood *et al*, 1996; Louis and Miles, 1990). This literature indicates that there is now a vastly different set of policies and discourses framing educational practice from those of the immediate post-World War 2 educational reform movements, which

foregrounded equity and social justice. These new policies and discourse agendas directly challenge, if not change, the context in which school leadership must work. There is a risk in running through trends in this way, of glossing over the very real differences that these trends take in different contexts, both within and between nation states. Nonetheless, similarities in policy direction are evident, and it is useful to outline them broadly. This is to recognise that the discourses of neo-liberal politics and its attendant new managerislim are global ones, but are nevertheless still practised in specific contexts, an interplay of the global and the local which Lingard (2000), following Appadurai (1996), has referred to as 'vernacular globalisation'.

Firstly, during the 1980s and 1990s, a new discourse of school effectiveness, efficiency and accountability emerged. Influential research has been conducted on school effectiveness, particularly in the USA and UK but also in Australia (see eg Fullan, 2000; Gray *et al*, 1999; Scheerens, 1992; Stoll and Fink, 1996). Lists of characteristics of effective schools have gained wide currency, as have the quality indicators which have emerged alongside them. As mentioned at the start of this paper, leadership has featured on every list of indicators of school effectiveness. School league tables, publishing of test scores, and other measures have highlighted performance indicators for schools, often on quantitative measures. Although this has met with strong criticism, there is no doubt that the agenda of what schools should be doing and how they should change has been reframed, away from equity towards performativity, which Ball (2000, p.1) defines as 'a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation, or a system of 'terror' in Lyotard;s words, that employs judgements, comparisions and displays as means of control, attrition and change'. Within this culture of performativity, the discourses of effectiveness, efficiency and accountability set new terms for school performance, which link well with economic rationalism and corporate managerialism, and in themselves put pressure on school leadership to perform in these terms. The new managerialism also puts 'parent as client' pressures upon school leadership (Clarke, 2000).

This may be all very well for schools who are able to draw on what Bourdieu (1985) terms the cultural and social capitals and economic resources of middle class parents and communities. However, it is by no means the same story for schools in poor, inner-city, edge-city or migrant communities, who very often stay at the bottom end of the league tables. Working for school change, to say nothing of equity, within this paradigm of effectiveness, efficiency and accountability poses real challenges for educational leadership, and needs to be more fully addressed by research and practice in leadership and school change. Redistributive funding is necessary for such schools to achieve, but is most often not forthcoming in the current neo-liberal era. Nonetheless, it is hard to argue against a position that calls for greater accountability from schools, particularly since they receive considerable funding from the public purse. What is important, we would argue, is to set the terms of accountability in ways which reflect the deeper educational and moral purposes of schooling, including those usually framed under the rubric of social justice.

An accompanying international trend is that educational reform is accompanied by assumptions of capped, if not reduced, state funding, and by the introduction of the market as a source of financing schools. In some places, this has meant that state schools are increasingly fee-paying, and/or there are drifts of funding from state to private schooling, so that the public/private divide is more complex. The shift in emphasis to the market in education reflects a profound change in ethical and social assumptions about schooling. Post-World War 2 expansion of education was underpinned by notions that education was important for the 'common good', and that it played a crucial role in providing equal opportunities as a basis for the participation of all in a democratic and just society. Taking this further, under welfare

state assumptions, education was viewed in social justice terms as a form of redistribution, whereby children in poverty would be supported in a more equitable manner and not disadvantaged educationally by their social circumstances (see Brown *et al*, 1997). In contrast, market assumptions in education place equity and social justice in the background, and foreground individuals as responsible for developing their own opportunities. While education is regarded as crucial in a knowledge society, the state's responsibility is to be more minimalist in provision. The assumption is that in the competitive environment of the market, schools will use resources more efficiently, and consumer choice will influence the direction they take. As Chapman points out, critics of the market model argue that public sector institutions become 'residualised' in that 'the public sector becomes the bottom of a resource-availability hierarchy - the place for those without capital to exchange for services and goods' (1996, p 35). Whatever position is taken, there can be little doubt that both state and private schools compete for students in complex market choice conditions. Assumptions of the welfare state no longer hold in Australia, and, as the work of Anna Yeatman (1991; 1993) and Bob Lingard (1993) points out, schools together with the public sector generally are governed by corporatist mangerialism. This is the terrain on which school leadership now operates, pushing school principals to be new managers rather than educational leaders, or to at least give priority to their management, rather than educational functions. There are tensions in this for principals who have to in their daily work participate in multiple fields, including the professional field of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment inside the school. Furthermore, as the case of the resilient schools demonstrated above, and as is also evidenced in the work of the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study on leadership (Ladwig, Luke and Lingard, 2000; Lingard, Mills and Hayes, 2000; Hayes, Mills, Lingard and Christie, 2001), a valuing of teaching and learning – pedagogy – by those in leadership positions is central to good leadership in schools focused on improving student outcomes.

Perhaps the most important trend in school reform in western countries is the move towards school self-management or school-based management. This has transformed the role of school leadership, introducing responsibility not only for finance and staffing, but also for school development. There is a broad literature on this, in which Australian scholars have been very active, and although there has been considerable debate about what self-management might mean as a policy and in its effects, there can be little doubt that it is here to stay (see Lingard *et al*, forthcoming; Land, 1998; Rizvi, 1993; Smyth, 1996; Chapman, 1990; Caldwell & Spinks, 1992). Some argue that self-management enables flatter hierarchies, more porous boundaries between schools and their environments, opportunities for multiskilling of staff, particularly management, and that de-bureaucratising brings schools into line with postmodern forms of organising. Critics argue that self-management which reduces state spending on and involvement in schools heightens the inequalities between schools and further privileges those with economic and cultural capital. The state's response is often that market choice is desirable and improves performance, and also that private contributions to schooling increase the overall amount that the society spends on education. While recognising the multiple factors implicated in the move to school-based management, there can be little doubt that leading self-managed schools brings new challenges and additional responsibilities and complexities for school leadership. At the same time as devolution towards self-managing schools, there is a counterveiling or contradictory trend, whereby the state is taking on new centralist functions. Perhaps a better way of encapsulating these changes would be as a reconstitution of the workings of the state. The new managerialism works through new centre/periphery relations, devolving on the one hand and centralising on the other. These two processes are best seen as the complementary relations of new loosely/tightly coupled educational systems. The

centralising tendencies of the new managerialism include developing state-wide frameworks (including curriculum frameworks), formulating strategic objectives for the system as a whole, setting standards of practice, monitoring quality and establishing accountability measures for performance and outcomes. Thus, greater autonomy comes with more visible accountability pressures. The inherent tension creates genuine dilemmas in the experiences of school leaders, rather than in the overall structural architecture of the new managerialist state. In Chapman's words:

> Although many of these reforms have been undertaken under the overt agenda of decentralisation, or devolution, the situation is far more complex than this. A closer examination of data and practices suggests that any attempt to elucidate the redistribution of power is likely to encounter and have to deal with a far more complex set of factors and variables than any account based upon a one dimensional or linear account of changed relationships along the centralisation-decentralisation continuum would suggest. (1996, p 36)

As Fullan says, 'school leaders must constantly negotiate this simultaneous centralisation-decentralisation terrain' (1996, p 702).

There are other tensions in this restructuring experienced by schools. Often curriculum is organised by a quasi-independent statutory authority separate from the education department which employs the teachers and runs the schools. Policy mis-alignment between these authorities can also add pressure on school leadership.

Alongside self-management is a related trend: changes in school governance, including new forms of school-community relations. Through both formal governance and more informal local conditions, there is what Fullan terms a 'comprehensive realignment of parental/ community/school relationships' (1996, p 702). School boundaries are more permeable, with greater potential for building more comprehensive learning systems around schools and their communities, involving the extension beyond teacher professional learning communities (Louis, Kruse, and Marks, 1996) to learning communities encompassing the school's surrounding community. With regard to employer interest and involvement in education, Brown *et al* comment that it has changed in the following way:

> ...calls from employers to have a greater say in the affairs of the school are increasingly less about getting the education system involved with programmes of specific vocational training, and more concerned with enhancing student business awareness, communication skills and self-management. (1997, p 10)

What is required of school leadership are new conceptualisations of parent and community relations, as well as links with industry and employers. In relation to parent/school relations, Vincent (2001) makes a distinction between parents as active agents in assisting a school achieve its purposes, parents as consumers/clients, and parents as partcipant/citizens. Educational restructuring often pushes school leaders into giving preference to 'parents as consumer' models, rather than a more embracing citizenship role, which would see parents involved in the creation of a school's philosophy and purposes and included in assisting the school achieve those collaboratively framed purposes. Again, this challenges school leadership in new ways.

Another trend observable across different countries is that there is more talk and action around developing teacher professionalism in ways that widen and deepen the

work of teachers (cf Hargreaves, 1993). This also brings new possibilities for collaboration and partnership inside and outside school boundaries. One effect of this is that there are more possibilities for teachers to share in leadership, and for greater leadership density to develop in the school. In this scenario, one of the roles of principals is to support forms of professional development which in fact decentre themselves as they open leadership opportunities for teachers. Certainly, working for teacher professionalism requires a dispersed form of curriculum leadership. These points suggest the challenges – and benefits – of leading teachers as professionals. We need to recognise, however, that there is some deprofessionalisation going on in the restructuring of school systems (Seddon, 1997) and that an agenda of reprofessionalisation will have to be fought for. In the UK, Jon Nixon and his colleagues (1997) have spoken of an emergent professionalsim to pick up on this reprofessionalisation agenda. Such a professionalism according to Nixon et al gives primacy to the relationship between the profession and its publics and the grounding of those relationships in a dialogue about learning and its purposes. This conceptualisation of the 'learning profession' complements Vincent's(2001) notion of school and community relations as involving full citizen participation. Both conceptions are, of course, linked to the idea of a school as a learning community or community of learners (cf Young, 1998).

An accompanying trend is that there are new curriculum pressures with which school leaders must engage. Dimmock and O'Donaghue define these as the 'micro-reforms' accompanying the 'macro-reforms' of devolution to self-management. In their words, this concerns:

> ...school restructuring in order to reform the technical core activities of teaching and learning. The focus...is on introducing more flexible, responsive and student-oriented service delivery by targetting change in work organisation, pedagogical practices and service delivery. (1997, pp1-2)

In many cases, curricula are defined by learning outcomes rather than by traditional content, and there is more emphasis on what Fullan terms 'teaching for understanding and performance in a changing world' (1996, p 703). Newmann and Associates (1996) have argued the need for school restructuring being geared to enhancing the intellectual quality of pedagogy. Changing patterns of employment, changing workplace competencies, and changing employment conditions are fundamentally reconfiguring the relationship between schools, the social world and the world of work.

Leading curriculum change with teachers and providing support for students are complex tasks facing school leadership. How ever this is defined, it remains the case that if teaching and learning are the major activities of schools as organisations, then leadership needs to engage with curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, what Bernstein (1971) called the three message systems of schooling. And if teacher professional development is important for curriculum change, then enabling this is an important leadership function. The alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment within a school is another significant task of school leadership. Another trend affecting school leadership is the expansion of new technologies, including information technologies. These impact on school leadership in a number of ways. The first is the role of technology in curriculum, teaching and learning. As Luke and Luke (2001) point out, the teaching of multiliteracies is needed to prepare all students for the knowledge demands of the new technologies, economies and cultures. The second challenge of new technologies for school leadership is that of managing information flows between schools and education departments and other external agencies, and having sufficient capacity in leadership more broadly to work

strategically with this. Thirdly, the new technologies challenge the enclosure of the modernist classroom and broaden potential school community (Edwards and Usher, 2000).

The second half of the twentieth century has seen the emergence of powerful forms of identity politics. Complex issues of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual politics play out more visibly in public life and need to be worked with at school level. These pose challenges for school leaders, who need to engage in new ways with issues of identity. There is also a way in which the restructuring of educational systems, which has affected schools and leadership within them, has precipitated a regendering of educational systems and schools. Lingard and Douglas (1999) have written about the 'structural backlash' (also see Blackmore, 1999) which the new managerialism has created through its installation of masculinist and technicist practices. The new emotional economies which flow through and around educational systems and schools have often seen women take on the emotional labour and emotional management necessary to keeping stressed schools and teachers going (Hargreaves,1998; Blackmore, 1999; Lingard and Douglas, 1999; Limerick and Lingard, 1995). The result has often been educational systems committed to formal equality of opportunity for women, but the system working in ways which inadvertently ensure this is not achieved in a substantive fashion with a retraditionalisation and detraditionalisation of gender occurring simultaneously (Giddens, 1990; Lingard and Douglas, 1999, ch 3). Leadership in schools has to give recognition to its gendered character (Limerick and Lingard, 1995).

Finally, an alarming trend is that alongside the 'traditional' poverties and inequalities of class, race and gender, new marginalisations are emerging, relating to globalisation and new economic, social and special reconfigurations (see Luke, 2000; Brown *et al*, 1997). The face of disadvantage is changing and a new geography of poverty and unemployment is emerging. New forms of poverty are marbled-in across the community, in Australia being concentrated on the edge of the large cities and in certain rural areas. These new patterns of poverty map onto historical patterns – Indigenous children, children from lower socio-economic groups, and some migrant groups. In a number of places, school retention rates are dropping, particularly where regional conditions militate against access to employment and improved incomes (Luke, 2000). Whatever the patterns of inequalities are, there is no doubt that schools are part of these, and that school leadership needs to understand and deal with what the Brown *et al* have called 'a new political arithmetic' of poverty and disadvantage (1997, p 37). At the same time, the neo-liberal politics which has almost become the hegemonic globalised discourse has witnessed weaker commitment to social justice policies and has most often worked with a weak 'individual deserts' model (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry, 1997, ch 7). The discourse of social justice has also been rearticulated through concepts of 'students at risk' and inclusion/exclusion (see Levitas, 1998) without strong redistributive funding approaches. These discourses can work in weak or stronger ways in relation to new inequalities and marginalisations.

Conclusion

This paper has worked across a broad terrain in attempting to understand the complexities of educational leadership. Having begun by attempting to clarify concepts and theories of leadership, it then developed an argument for a more complex understanding of leadership, based on research into school dysfunction and resilience in South Africa. The paper then sketched some broad trends affecting school leadership in a number of western countries. It now remains to outline briefly the implications of this for an understanding of leadership.

First, the central role of school leadership should be understood as supporting and enabling the substantive work of schools, which is teaching and learning. Whatever other concerns might present themselves to school leadership, it is important that they not lose this as their main focus. Pat Thomson (2001) has shown how a major professional magazine for educational administrators in Australia deals overwhelmingly with issues of management to the neglect of educational policy and curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Issues such as new forms of school/ community relationships, fundraising and marketing may be necessary to ensure that schools survive and thrive, but they are not sufficient; leading teaching and learning ought to be at the heart of school leadership, rather than a managerial heart of darkness.

This does not imply that the principal should lead alone. A second point is that given the range of challenges facing schools, it is unlikely that the principal could carry out everything alone, even if this were desirable. Rather, it is important that leadership is stretched and dispersed across different tasks and people (see Elmore, 1999; Crowther, Hann, McMaster and Ferguson, 2000). There are possibilities for leadership at all levels within schools, from classrooms to governing bodies. Moving away from hierarchical notions of leadership, Louis, Kruse and Marks (1996) talk of principals being 'at the centre' of the school, rather than 'at the top'. Patrick Whitaker (1998) takes a similar approach in talking about 'multi-layered leadership':

> It seems that leadership is an altogether more diffuse concept than we have traditionally come to believe, that it can be exercised at all levels within organisations and that all participants are capable of practising it in some way. (1998, p 147)

Concepts of 'parallel leadership' (Crowther et. al, 2000), 'density of leadership' and building 'leadership capacity in schools' (Lambert, 1998) also capture the notion that leadership goes beyond the single individual and her/his traits and behaviours, to a much more dispersed responsibility for tasks with multiple and varied forms of leadership within the multiple fields in which schools are embedded. The South African material presented earlier also shows the importance of influencing student and staff leadership to support the main work of the school. The QSRLS work on school leadership also supports such a conception (Lingard, Mills and Hayes, 2000; Hayes, Mills, Lingard and Christie, 2001).

Where schools are functioning well as organisations, their administrative and managerial work may well be almost invisible. However, as the studies of dysfunctional and resilient schools in South Africa illustrate, it is crucial that schools function effectively as organisations if the work of teachers and students is to be supported (cf Thomson, 1999). Decentring the prominence of the leader as individual does not mean that leadership has no organisational roles. Indeed, as Louis, Kruse and Marks (1996) point out, the principal is in the best position to negotiate changes in organisational structures and help create an organisational

culture conducive to pedagogical reform. In the move away from hierarchical structures towards flatter and more flexible management structures and processes, leadership has a key role to play. Vision-building, creating networks and structures to support the work of others, negotiating boundaries, aligning tasks and authority remain the responsibility of the principal, together with ongoing organisational and management work to support teaching and learning. Differentiated responsibilities, collaboration, teams which form to address specific tasks and then disband – all of these approaches are alternatives to the traditional hierarchical notions of leadership. While leadership may be spread and stretched, it remains the case that a lot of leadership activity is needed for schools to thrive. This density of leadership needs to be focused on the enhancment of the organisational capacity of the school.

Thirdly, building on the work of Karen Louis and her colleagues (1996), the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study proposes the importance of teacher professional learning communities for the enhancement of whole school effects. (See Lingard, *et al*, 2000.) Louis et. al (1996) adumbrate the following as the characteristics of teacher professional learning community: reflective and collaborative pedagogical practices, along with the deprivatisation of such practices, framed by a coherent statement of values. This is the manifestation of the concept of the school as learning community, where substantive professional conversations about pedagogy are at the core of professional culture within the school. In such a school on-going teacher learning is central and related to the goal of enhancing both the academic and social learning of all students. Ensuring the development of such a teacher professional learning community would be a key task for school leadership. In really effective schools, teacher professional learning communities would be a subset of a broader learning community. Such a community would enshrine the concept of parents and community as active citizens/participants in the work of the school (cf Vincent, 2001), and also put in place Nixon et. al's (1997) concept of the learning profession.

Fourthly, the trends in school reform and restructuring outlined in the previous section highlighted changes in the relationship of schools to the state, to parents and communities, to business, and to external organisations. The notion of the school as existing behind its walls – if ever it was true – certainly does not hold true in these 'new times'. The new technologies reconstitute the real and other communities within which schools are located (Edwards and Usher, 2000). Not only are schools more evidently accountable to external constituencies and market relationships; it is also the case that they need to network across their boundaries to access knowledge, people and material resources. Leadership faces the challenge of positioning schools locally within the framework of state policies and establishing collaborative relationships with their local communities. Leadership requires social capital on behalf of formal leadership. This positioning of schools should not be confused with 'turning schools into businesses'. Rather, it is about developing more permeable boundaries and establishing external relationships, while keeping learning and teaching as central goals.

It is worth recalling at this point that the South African resilient schools discussed earlier showed features of inner cohesion and drew more from relationships close to their boundaries than from more distant sources. This suggests that in situations of social crisis, and particularly in threatening environments, inner cohesion and resources may be a significant source of strength. Without inner cohesion, schools became dysfunctional. Even so, these schools that survived against the odds needed to negotiate their continued existence and safety with their immediate communities, and the leadership challenges outlined here apply to them as well. We would also stress that there is a way in which the emergent post-bureaucratic

educational systems in many ways do not know how to operate in relation to enhancing schools' capacity building abilities.

Fifthly, there is the key issue of accountability. Dispersal of leadership, finding different ways of working, and developing permeable boundaries do not reduce the accountability of principals and deputies for achieving the goals of the school. No matter what strategies, structures and cultures are developed, those with designated responsibility in an organisation are accountable for its operations and outcomes. As schools become more complex organisations, so responsibility and accountability may become more complex. Harder though it may be for leadership in these 'new times', accountability remains a primary concern for school heads. Leadership in schools must, however, be about more than hierarchical accountability. Concepts of democratic accountability for schools, Rizvi (1990) has suggested, would see them working within multiple relations of accountability. In such a situation, 'horizontal accountability' to students, parents and community would be necessary to complement the more traditional hierarchical or vertical conceptualisations. This would be accountability well beyond the emptiness and depthlessness, and at times 'fabrication' of the culture of performativity which now shrouds many restructured schools (Ball, 1999, 2000).

Sixthly, theories of organisations – and of schools – may be inclined to neglect the perspective of the individuals who make up the organisation, while focusing on structure and culture. Viewing organisations as smoothly operating systems may provide too rational a picture of organisational life. Lived experience in organisations shows us that they are infused with emotions, intrigue and micropolitics, and the study of dysfunctional schools highlights the importance of organisational containment. Given the complex dynamics of schools as organisations, it is necessary for those in leadership and headship to recognise a process or emotional agenda. The QSRLS has argued the need for leadership to create a culture of care within the school to ensure a positive emotional economy and support for risk taking (Hayes, Mills, Lingard and Christie, 2001). Aligning the process agenda to ensure that the organisation is able to meet its primary goals is a necessary task for leadership.

Finally, this paper has argued that leadership needs to be understood in terms of the complex interplay of the personal/ biographical, the institutional/ organisational, and the broader social, political and economic context. Utilising Bourdieu (1998), we need to see the formal leaders within the school, with their particular dispositions and habituses, sitting at the intersection of competing fields[2], each with its own flows of power, hierarchy of relations and logic of practice. Principal position taking occurs at the intersection of habitus with the structure and logic of the various fields within which principals are located. As Bourdieu has noted elsewhere, 'Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents' (1996, p.213). Thomson's (2001, p.19) account of principals as needing to be 'saturated in pedagogies' and 'ethically involved with the ambiguities and

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2 For a good account of Bourdieu's concept of field see his *On Television and Journalism* (1998), London: Pluto Press. This entire study is an exemplification of the fields of television and journalism and their particular logics of practice. The concepts of 'circular circulation' and 'structural amnesia' which he applies to the field of journalism might also have some interesting purchase in educational policy considerations. The former refers to the way various media outlets run with stories in a non-developmental way that other outlets have run with, while the latter refers to the quick forgetting of previous stories in the reporting of an event which in some ways appears to have little prior history. Bourdieu's (1996) *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of Literary Fields*, Cambridge: Polity Press also provides a good account of the concept of field.

complexities of life in schools' picks up very nicely on this conception of principal leadership in schools. Within the approach outlined throughout this paper, leadership is seen as a dynamic process where conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational forces play out in complex social situations. The task of educational leaders and theorists of leadership is to work creatively with complexity if schools are to meet the goals of providing high quality teaching and learning for all students in the most equitable way possible.

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